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RUEHGO/AMEMBASSY RANGOON 0211
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SUBJECT: ASSAM SITREP - JANUARY 10, 2007

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¶1. (SBU) On January 9, Defense Minister A K Anthony and Army Chief J.J. Singh met Assam Chief Minister Tarun Gogoi and local Army officials of the 4 Corps in Assam to review the security situation in the state. There are reports of a mass exodus of Hindi-speaking migrants from Assam following the violence unleashed by the United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA) against primarily Hindi-speaking "outsiders" from mainland India, killing over 70 people. The Defense Minister said that the government will be firm in handling the situation, but also will be open to talks with ULFA, if ULFA is willing to renounce violence without any pre-conditions. Anthony also said that ULFA is present in Bangladesh and Burma, and that the government would take up the issue with both countries. The Center has dispatched additional security forces to Assam, which are deployed in Upper Assam for area domination and restoration of law and order for the time being. On January 8, the Army had reportedly, deployed 10,000 troops and on January 9, the GOI had dispatched 12 paramilitary companies (approximately 2500 troops) and another 8 companies were to follow. GOI military forces have also increased their presence in the neighboring state of Arunachal Pradesh to control the movement of ULFA cadres across state lines.

¶2. (SBU) ULFA appeared undeterred by the increased military and security presence and continued with bomb attacks on security sites in the capital Guwahati. On January 8, two bombs hidden in bicycles exploded near the Narengi army cantonment in Guwahati's Satgaon district. 11 people were injured, including two Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) personnel. On January 9, the same day of Defense Minister Anthony's meeting with senior military leaders, a bomb planted in a motorcycle exploded at the entrance of the police station in Guwahati's high security, capital district of Dispur, critically injuring two policemen.

¶3. (SBU) Comment: The violence in Assam will likely continue and possibly escalate as ULFA responds to increased security pressure and seeks to capitalize on the upcoming January 26 Republic Day celebrations and the early-February 33rd Annual National Games to maximize the impact of its terror tactics. Defense Minister Anthony said that the security forces would do whatever it takes to crush ULFA, which in turn presents the prospect of heavy-handed treatment of the civilian communities

in which ULFA operates. Paramilitary groups such as the Assam Rifles are notorious for human rights violations and could be given greater latitude in suppressing ULFA and its perceived sympathizers. The violence could also spread as ULFA has bases in neighboring countries and other Northeast Indian states. Post is clearing a warden message through the Department to warn AMCITS about the deteriorating situation in Assam.

JARDINE